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TAGS: PROB PINR IZ

SUBJECT: BABIL: GOVERNOR SIDELINED; POSSIBLE CHANGES IN ISF LEADERSHIP

REF: HILLAH 0002

CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth M. hillas, PRT Leader, Babil PRT, Dept of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) Other than one or two public appearances, Governor Salim Saleh Mahdi Al-Muslimawi has largely disappeared from the public stage since the election. According to various political party leaders, Gov Muslimawi has also not played a role in inter-party discussions about filling provincial leadership positions.

Da'wa leader Abu Ahmed Al-Basri's ISCI counterpart in these discussions has been Hafez Al-Yasiri, the personal representative of ISCI national leader Abd Al-Aziz in the province. At the same time, negotiations at the national level among Sadrists, Da'wa, Jaffari's Reform Trend, ISCI and Allawi's Iraqi National List, have also touched on provincial leadership positions, according to several Babil party officials.

Notwithstanding reports about Allawi's Al-Iraqiya party entering into an alliance with ISCI in other provinces, a deal between Al-Iraqiya and Da'wa in Babil remains on the table, according to Sheik Adnan Janabi who has ties to Al-Iraqiya.

¶12. (C) The consensus among Babil's elite is that the ISCI national leadership may transfer outgoing Governor Al-Muslimawi to Baghdad. Al-Muslimawi publicly met with Abd Al-Aziz Al-Hakim in Baghdad on February 22. He has been blamed by most observers for ISCI's poor showing in the province, which contrasted sharply with pre-election expectations within ISCI. In the run-up to the election there was a strong sense of confidence -- perhaps even hubris -- among ISCI provincial officials that they would succeed in winning the vote and continue to control the province (reftel). Post-election negotiations, however, have made clear that ISCI is marginalized and likely consigned to an opposition role in the PC, unless a decision in Baghdad as part of a broader deal resurrects a leadership position for ISCI in Babil.

¶13. (C) Da'wa party leader Abu Ahmed Al-Basri confirmed to the PRT leader that he views Badr as posing a serious security threat to the new provincial government and Da'wa leaders. He has signalled to us that there may be a few changes in ISF leadership beyond the transfer of the 31st Army Brigade Commander MG Abdul Ameer to Ramadi that took place this week. SWAT Commander Col. Abbas Al-Jabbouri told us on February 23 that Provincial Director of Police MG Fadhill Raddad will soon be replaced, although he did not know by whom.

¶14. (C) Al-Basri has made clear that the national Da'wa leadership has played a leading role in the negotiating process, especially with regard to the governorship. Al-Basri continues to state that he does not want to be the next Governor, and has hinted that the Majid Fulyfel Khulayf Hamzah, the head of Rafidain Bank in Babil and the number two on Da'wa's candidate list, is his preference. This would appear consistent with Al-Basri's desire to have the next Governor be someone who is educated, competent and experienced in public administration. Da'wa provincial leaders are confident they can cobble together a majority on the provincial council, but they may still have to strike a deal with former Governor Iskander Witwit's Independent

bloc to achieve this.

HILLAS